

## SOVIET AERONAUTICS IN THE ANALYSIS OF ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES (SEPTEMBER 1940 - JUNE 1941)

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**Abstract:** *The Romanian intelligence services have closely monitored the Soviet forces that occupied Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in June-July 1940. Between September 1940 and June 1941, special attention was paid to Soviet aviation (aerodromes, aviation units, types of aircraft, doctrine, etc.) located on Romania's borders. On June 22, 1941, when the conflict between Germany and allies (including Romania) and the USSR began, the Romanian army had pertinent information about the Soviet armies in Bessarabia and Bukovina, especially about the air force. These data were used by Romanian-German forces to take by surprise the Soviet aeronautics and annihilate them.*

**Keywords:** *Romania, Soviet Union, aircraft, intelligence, analysis*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Romanian-Soviet diplomatic relations were broken in 1918 and resumed in 1934, at the initiative of the great national and European politician, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nicolae Titulescu (Nicolae Titulescu (b. 4 martie 1882, Craiova – d. 17 martie 1941, Cannes) law Phd in Paris, professor at the Law Faculty in Iași (1904-1909), then in Bucharest (1910-1927). Deputy (1912) from the Conservative Democratic Party, participates in the government as Minister of Finance (july 1917-january 1918 and june 1920-december 1921). Minister Plenipotentiary in London (december 1921), permanent delegate to the Society of Nations (april 1924), he is appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs (july 1927-july 1928), position which he will take again in the period october 1932-august 1936) [1]. Despite a resurgence of bilateral relations, the fact that the Soviet Union did not recognize the union of Basarabia with Romania (March 27, 1918) was a difficult obstacle to overcome and kept Bucharest's distrust and suspicion of any statement by Moscow. The Romanian army was constantly considering a possible attack by the Red Army and, consequently, most of the resources were allocated to large units in the north and east of the country. At the same time, the main objective of the intelligence services was to obtain anticipatory data on the organization, deployment and endowment of Soviet military forces, especially those near the common border.

Despite the information provided by the Second Intelligence Section of the General Staff and the Special Intelligence Service (SSI), in the summer of 1940 the Romanian political leadership decided not to react militarily to the Soviet ultimatum of June 26, 1940, which demanded retrocession of Basarabia and, as compensation for the exploitation of the region for 20 years, northern Bucovina [2].

Also by the decision of the political leadership of the state, the army did not react either against the Vienna Dictate (August 30, 1940), by which over 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> were assigned to Hungary by Germany and Italy, or against the surrender of the Quadrilateral to Bulgaria. Against this background, King Carol II, who assumed the leadership of the country in February 1938, was forced to find a solution to the existing crisis and decided to appoint General Ion Antonescu to lead the government (September 4, 1940). Two days later, under pressure from the entire Romanian society, King Carol II abdicated in favor of his son, Mihai, and left the country with his mistress, Elena Lupescu, and his trusted man, Ernest Urdăreanu.

## **2. THE SOVIET AERONAUTICS IN THE ATTENTION OF ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES FOR THE PERIOD OF NEUTRALITY**

The new prime minister was a well-known name both in the army, where he stood out during the War of Integration (1916-1919) and in later managerial positions - military attaché in France and England, commands of large units, the Higher War School, the Great General Staff (1933-1934) and Minister of National Defense (1937-1938). Obviously, among other qualities, Ion Antonescu knew and appreciated the power of information at its fair value, being one of the beneficiaries with a solid security culture. That is why, since taking office as prime minister, he has demanded exact information on the military forces of all neighbors near Romania's borders, but with an emphasis on the northern and eastern border area, where it is most dangerous. enemy - USSR. For this he needed competent people to lead the information structures, which he chose personally, based on personal qualities and professional results. Colonel Polihron Dumitrescu - September 1940-May 1941, (b. 1893, Milcov-Olt-d. 1977, Craiova, attended the Higher War School in France between 1922 and 1924, being a colleague of Charles de Gaulle. As President of France, he gave the report to him in Craiova, in May 1968, on the occasion of his visit to Romania) [3] and Colonel Radu Dinulescu - June 1941-May 1942, (b. 20 January 1898, Căndești-Buzău – d. 6 February 1984, București, became first lieutenant (1 July 1916), participated in the War of Integration, attended the Higher War School (1923-1925) and the Infantry Application School at Versailles (1929-1930). He was appointed assistant military attaché in Paris (1930-1932), then, in 1937, moved permanently to the Second Intelligence Section, which he led (1941-1942). He was appointed military attaché in Stockholm and Helsinki (1942) until the end of the war, when he was recalled and placed in reserve on March 26, 1945. In 1953 he was sentenced to 15 years of forced labor, and in 1957 his sentence was reduced to 5 years. In 1998 the Supreme Court of Justice accepted the appeal for annulment and acquitted him post-mortem) [4] took over the leadership of the Second Intelligence Section, while Colonel Ioan Nicolaid (September- November 1940), followed by Eugen Cristescu - November 1940-August 1944, (b. 3 April 1895, Grozești-Bacău – m. 12 June 1950, Văcărești prison, graduate of the Faculty of Law in Iași, entered in 1921 the Directorate of Police and General Security (since 1929 General Directorate of Police), led the Directorate of General Security (1925-1927), the Directorate of Security Police (1927-1934) and the Directorate of Administrative Police (1934-1940). From November 12, 1940, he was appointed general director of the Special Intelligence Service, a position he held until August 23, 1944. Arrested, investigated in Moscow (1944-1946), tried in the trial of the great national betrayal (May 1946) he was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment) [5].

On September 20, 1940, the Head of State received from the SSI - Eastern Front a folder containing the "probable military situation" [6] of the USSR forces. The identification was carried out on five areas (Bukovina, northern Basarabia, central Basarabia, southern Basarabia and the Danube), with large units staggered in the first and second lines (**Sketch 1**).



**Sketch 1**

A total of 25 large units were identified, of which 17 infantry divisions, three cavalry divisions, four mechanized divisions and one large naval unit. On this material, General Antonescu noted: "Maps of the enemy's situation must be placed on the walls of my office. We need a map of the old borders and the current borders. A map or maps with battle fronts" [6].

At the same time, the Head of State received another folder, entitled "The Soviet Air Force and Aerodromes of Basarabia and Northern Bukovina" (**Sketch 2**), which presented the Red Army air force. Thus, the Romanian intelligence services identified three fighter aviation brigades, two heavy bombing brigades, two light bombing brigades and an air landing brigade. Based on the deployment of the aerodromes, it was found that the "bulk" [7] of the air units are located in northern Bukovina and northern Basarabia.



**Sketch 2**

Also, many airfields with 3-5 aircraft were pushed forward and provided "dispersion and offensive spirit" [7], but were rudimentarily arranged and without complex machinery or equipment.

The aircraft were classified in two categories: old-fashioned, which included I-16 (fighter, monoplane), DI-6 (fighter, two-seater) and ANT (four-engine, for bombing, parachute and medical troops transport), respectively modern, which included Savoy - 79B (three-engine, for bombing) and SB-3 Katush (twin-engine, for bombing and reconnaissance), (The data provided contains an inaccuracy, as there was no SB-3 Katushka aircraft, but SB-2 Katushka. It was probably confused with the TB-3, or ANT-6, one of the best devices of the Red Army: „But Tupolev unveils a heavier and more powerful bomber in 1930: the TB-3, the world's first four-engine monoplane with a free support wing. TB-3 was the largest aircraft in the world, whether military or civilian. No one, nowhere, had such aircraft in production or even in the design phase. Several world records have been set with TB-3, including 5, 10 and 12 tonne high-altitude flights”) [8]. However, the conclusion of military analysts was that these aircraft have "poor performance and even those considered modern are not the size of aircraft operating on the Western Front" [9].

Another briefing on Soviet forces in Basarabia and northern Bukovina was prepared by the Second Intelligence Section, the 1st Intelligence Bureau, the Eastern Front Agency, on October 25, 1940. Based on data obtained and analyzed in the last two weeks, it was found "a resurgence" [10] of the activity of Soviet units (**Sketch 3**). On November 11, 1940, another material from Section II found that enemy forces in Bukovina and the Prut area continued the "same activity" [10] of reconnaissance, vigilant patrols, defensive work, transport of materials, etc. (**Sketch 4**).



**Sketch 3**



**Sketch 4**

At the same date, a large and well-documented material was presented, named "Information Synthesis on USSR Aeronautics", divided into commands (deployment and names of commanders) and units, which are structured on the military districts of European Russia and Asian Russia. In the European part, six air corps and 34 independent aviation brigades were identified, totaling 6,500 aircraft (2,500 for hunting and assault, 2,000 for bombing and 2,000 for observations and information). Of these, 900 were deployed in Basarabia and northern Bukovina, attesting to the Soviet leadership's interest in the region. Two air forces and 15 independent brigades were stationed in Asian Russia, totaling 3,000 planes.

How accurate were the data obtained and the analyzes elaborated by the Romanian intelligence services we find out after the opening of the archives and bringing to light the documents. The Russian military historian Mikhail Meltiuhov published in his book *The Lost Opportunity of Stalin* (Vece Publishing House, Moscow, 2005) and some comparative tables with the Soviet and German troops, respectively, existing on June 22, 1941. In Table 47, Meltiuhov shows that on June 22, 1941, the Soviet Air Force had 10,743 aircraft, compared to only 4,846 of the Axis forces, with a ratio of 2.2: 1 in favor of the Red Army. Thus, we can appreciate that the data of SSI and of Section II were correct, well documented and transmitted in advance to the legal beneficiaries.

### 3. THE SOVIET AERONAUTICS IN THE ATTENTION OF ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES FOR THE PREVIOUS PERIOD TO RELEASE OF THE BASARABIA AND BUCOVINA DE NORD ELIBERATION

In April 1941, SSI - Section I Foreign Intelligence, Eastern Front developed a complex material named "*USSR - Synthesis on war preparation*" [11], structured on issues, and these on chapters. In *The Military Situation - the Army*, the material contains 10 chapters, from generalities to the battle order of the army. In Chapter VI, *Ideas from the doctrine of the Red Army*, the following points are provided:

1. The army as an instrument of war. (...)
2. The purpose of the war and the possibilities of realization. (...)
3. Principles for the use of different weapons and means of combat: Infantry (...). Artillery (...). Cavalry (...). Large mechanized units (...).

Large aviation units: "In addition to independent and collaborative missions, they can receive destruction missions, acting on columns, means of transport, concentrations of troops and equipment (with light bombers), bridges (with bombers), aviation located on the aerodrome (with fighter jets, assault and light bombardment). In collaboration with the actions of the front units it can bring the decision in a certain direction".

Also in Chapter X, *Aeronautics. Aviation*, it is mentioned: "Soviet leaders did not spare any effort to equip the red military forces with aviation. Aviation was a very important issue, which attracted the attention of drivers much earlier than any other technical issue.

At the beginning of June 1941, the Central Intelligence Service submitted to the Prime Minister a material on the existing forces of the Red Army throughout the USSR, based on data provided by Section II and SSI (**Sketch 5**). It should be noted that the sketch states that the data were provided by a "trustworthy" source [12]. Near the Romanian borders there were 24-25 infantry divisions, four cavalry divisions and 18 battle brigades. Another sketch includes the "probable [12] deployment of large enemy units at the western border (**Sketch 6**), and an annex shows the existence of units and large units on which the garrison was unknown, which were moved or in temporary garrisons. Among them were, in the Leningrad Military District, the 3rd Fighter Aviation Division, the 7th Fighter Aviation Regiments, the 3rd Heavy Bombardment, the 53rd Rapid Bombardment, and the 82nd, 20th and 20th Airborne Regiments, all without establishing a garrison. The garrisons of the 43rd Fighter Aviation and 136th Rapid Bombardment Regiments had not been identified in the Kiev Special Military District, and the 17th Fighter Aviation Regiment had left its base in Welisk. Also, from the Odessa Military District were deployed in other areas, unknown, the 22nd Air Division, with the 8th, 11th and 21st Regiments, the 243rd Aviation Brigade, the 131st Hunting Aviation Regiments, 228th and 161/178th. Another regiment - 146 Fighter Aviation - had already been deployed to Ketscha.



On June 22, 1941, with the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and its allies, including Romania and the USSR, Romanian troops had at their disposal the organization and disposition of enemy forces. In the first days of the confrontations, the Romanian aviation was confronted with “a hunting regiment and a bombing regiment on the Chisinau North field, a hunting regiment on the Bolgrad field and a bombing regiment on the Cetatea-Albă field. In the Ismail Chilia area - Arciz were, at that time, unidentified aviation elements” [13].



Sketch 5



Sketch 6

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The Romanian intelligence services had real and anticipatory information on the Soviet military forces as a whole, with a focus on the western border and, especially, in Basarabia and Bukovina. The data were obtained / cross-checked between the General Information Section of the General Staff and the SSI. Secondly, the types of aircraft, the deployment of units and large aviation units throughout the USSR, of the landing grounds, as well as the doctrine of the Red Army in the field of air forces were identified. The data obtained have been used by combat units since June 22, 1941 to annihilate the enemy. During the air battles, the Romanian forces had, from the beginning, the initiative and the supremacy, based both on the information held and on the qualities of the equipped planes.

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